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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

DECONTROL

Date: June 27, 1977

Subject: Refugees and U.S. Human Rights Policy ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Participants: Robert Muller - UNHCR
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
Yvonne Thayer - POL

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny
Exemption(s):

Place: Reed/Thayer Residence

☒ In Part ☒ In Full **DECLASSIFIED**
☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to
Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

Mr. Muller mentioned that Uruguayan Gerardo Gatti's daughter--seven months pregnant--had disappeared along with her Argentine beau or husband several months ago after apparently having been abducted. Her case was one of few but continuing sporadic incidents of Uruguayan refugee disappearances. (Gatti, a union leader, was reportedly brutally tortured in Argentina by Argentine and Uruguayan security forces. His family all got visas to resettle in Europe but this 19-year-old daughter preferred to stay behind in Argentina with her Argentine boyfriend.) UNHCR raised case with Gen. Harguindeguy on call June 27.

During same call, Harguindeguy informed UNHCR that of some ⁴⁰⁰⁰ ~~600~~ refugees who registered with authorities as required by law last November, approximately ⁷⁵⁰ ~~400~~ would be permitted to remain in Argentina and would receive work and residents permits, etc. The remaining ^{375 or so} would best be resettled outside the country. Muller said that despite offer, he believed entire refugee group would continue to seek UNHCR assistance and resettlement abroad. UNHCR prefers and requests host country to provide resettlement opportunities for refugees and had eagerly sought GOA cooperation. But by now, Muller said, the refugee grapevine has passed on glowing stories of the good life of refugees already resettled abroad and, regardless of the Argentine offer, ^{these remaining} ~~they~~ will prefer to get what they perceive is a "better deal" by resettling outside Argentina. Muller did not demonstrate usual attitude that Argentine offer provided no real security for refugees; he agreed that refugees' motive was to get the best possible deal and said that he couldn't now withdraw cases pending in foreign resettlement programs for persons who have now been offered a future in Argentina.

In general discussion on U.S. human rights policy, Muller said politely but firmly that U.S. policy appears produced and packaged for domestic consumption and internal political gain. He noted that a retiring Belgian UNHCR official recently blasted the U.S. in his outgoing speech for taking advantage of international human rights problems for U.S. political profit. (Muller again pointed to U.S. reluctance and pickiness in taking in refugees, as example.) He specifically cited example of U.S. official protest to GOA ambassador on the unsolved break-in at Coordinadora Social refugee office last spring which he said was hasty, dangerous, unnecessary and undesirable from the point of view of the agencies involved and obviously a gesture

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designed simply to make the U.S. feel good. I asked whether it was preferable never to do anything at all and he replied that USG should be more careful to ascertain facts, consult opinion of agencies involved and consider possible negative repercussions of action before unilaterally making official representations on behalf of others.

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